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A LECTURE

ON THE

WRITINGS,

AND

LITERARY AND PERSONAL CHARACTER

OF THE

RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE,

DELIVERED AT SEVERAL

METROPOLITAN LITERARY INSTITUTIONS,

BY

ALFRED A. FRY, ESQ.

OF LINCOLN'S INN.

"The writings of Burke remain on record as an inheritance to the most distant posterity."—ERSKINE.

"A philosophical review of Burke's speeches and writings, keeping his politics as his inferior gift in the background, would serve for the subject of an useful and interesting discussion."—BUTLER'S REMINISCENCES.

LONDON :

HENRY HOOPER, PALL MALL, EAST.

1838

*Charles Francis
with the author's
revision*

LONDON; PRINTED BY A. HANCOCK,
MIDDLE ROW PLACE, HOLBORN.

TO
ARTHUR HILL, ESQ.
MY INSTRUCTOR AND MY FRIEND,
I DEDICATE
THIS LECTURE;
AS A SINCERE, THOUGH HUMBLE,
MEMORIAL,
OF MY
GRATITUDE AND ESTEEM.
ALFRED A. FRY.

THE Lecture which is now respectfully submitted to the Public, through the medium of the Press, was delivered by the Author, during the last few months, at eight of the Metropolitan Literary Institutions. The flattering reception which it met on those occasions the Author is fully conscious was due, rather to the interesting nature of the subject, and the kind indulgence of the respectable and intelligent assemblies which he had the honour to address, than to any intrinsic merit in the Lecture. He ventures, however, to hope, that the work now printed may be found useful to the young student in his meritorious labours, and may tend in some degree to familiarize some portion of his countrymen with the literary merits and intellectual powers of Edmund Burke.

Chancery Lane, May, 1838.

LECTURE
ON THE
WRITINGS OF EDMUND BURKE.

THE Institution whose members I have now the honour of addressing, is entitled "Literary and Scientific." The pledge conveyed to its subscribers and the public by that title, is amply redeemed by the mode in which its proceedings are conducted. Moral Philosophy and General Literature alternate with the Physical Sciences, in affording subjects for public lectures; and those inquiries which necessarily demand the aid of philosophical apparatus for their due comprehension and explanation, have no unfair preference awarded them by the Directors of this Institution. Deeply indebted, indeed, as every such society must be, to the highly intelligent men by whom such inquiries are so conducted, this Chair, however, I confess I see with pleasure, is not all their own. I have ever thought that "Letters" and "Morals" contain as appropriate subjects for public lectures as the Physical Sciences; subjects which are not only of great importance, but deeply interesting to every human being of sound mind and feeling; some of them almost as remote from ordinary speculation, as the recondite theories on the tides or the abstruse calculations of La Place. And not only may they be out of the usual track of the mind's course, but even if they have been speculated upon, the difficulty of learning the proper mode of pursuing the inquiry, or of ascertaining the proper books for that purpose, may be as great as that of following the discoveries of Davy, Dalton, or Faraday, from the want of chemical or electrical apparatus. If it be objected, as I believe it often has been, that the student may acquire a thorough knowledge of such subjects by *reading*, and that the retirement of the closet is indeed better adapted to their investigation; I reply in the language of Gibbon, [*Me-*

moirs,] that “there is a material difference between a book and a professor; the *hour* of the Lecturer enforces attendance, attention is fixed by his voice, presence and delivery; the most idle will carry something away, and the more diligent will compare the instructions which they have received with the volumes which they peruse in their chamber.” It must be admitted, however, that the Lecturer on such subjects labours under comparative disadvantage arising from the nature of his appeal, which, unassisted by practical experiments and diagrams, is addressed to the reason and imagination, rather than the senses, of his audience. He, therefore, necessarily trusts to the interest which must be felt by every intelligent mind in those subjects, and confidently does so while deeply impressed with the important truths admirably announced by Leo X. in the Patent [*See Roscoe’s Leo x. vol. ii. c. xi.*] conferring the exclusive privilege of printing the first complete edition of Tacitus, the MSS. of which, were first collected and ushered into the world at his own great expense, by that munificent and classic Pontiff. He there justifies his noble devotion of the revenues of the Roman See to the advancement of Literature, in language truly worthy of Sovereigns, but which has unfortunately not often proceeded, at least sincerely, from their lips. He says, “Amongst the other objects of our attention since we have been raised by Divine goodness to the Pontifical dignity, and devoted to the government and extension of the Christian Church, we have considered those pursuits as not the least important which lead to the *promotion of literature and useful arts*; for we have been accustomed even from our early years to think that nothing more excellent or more useful has been given by the Creator to mankind, if we except only the knowledge and true worship of Himself, than these studies, which not only lead to the ornament and guidance of human life, but are applicable and useful to every particular situation; in adversity consolatory, in prosperity pleasing and honourable, insomuch, that without them we should be deprived of all the grace of life and all the polish of society.”

One subject connected with these interesting inquiries, and peculiarly deserving the attention of such an Institution as the present, appears to me to be an examination of the *literary character and writings of Edmund Burke*; one of that brilliant constellation of luminaries who have shed such a lustre over their native isle, by not only contributing to her literary glories, but by taking a distinguished part in her public councils and administration. Few exercises, indeed, can be more improving, as few can be more interesting, than that of following great men of this description through their elevated existence; regarding them from afar in reverence, but still with the sympathy which makes us feel that each of us may gather from some portion of their lives and works some useful lesson for his conduct—some instruction for his understanding, and some improvement of his feelings. The study of the material wonders of creation, of animal and vegetable life, is replete with interest and instruction; but I cannot be prevailed upon to think that mechanical, chemical, anatomical, or physiological qualities deserve our attention, or should excite our curiosity, like the contemplation of the mental and moral characteristics of our species. Well, in my opinion, did Aurungzebe reprove his master in after life for not having taught him the true philosophy, “the knowledge,” as he expresses it, “of *what we are*.” [*St. John’s edit. of Locke’s Education*, 132, note.] If, then, “the proper study of mankind be man,” the noblest portion of that study must surely be the characteristics of *illustrious* men; nor, in a literary institution can any department of knowledge, more useful, entertaining, or elevating, engage the attention of its members than the biographies of men whose immortal pages have instructed and delighted their race. Such institutions as this are, indeed, the appropriate temples where perpetual homage should be rendered to the memory of such men. Here should the incense ascend, and here their *Io Pæans* should be sung! You should imitate the great republics of antiquity who appointed rhapsodists to recite at stated periods the poems of Homer,—you should imitate the noble example of the merchant princes of the family of the

Medici, who supported, at their own private charge, public lecturers on Plato. We must not, however, bow with the blind and headlong zeal of devotees ; but before we award such honours, should decide with the dignified impartiality of judges. And, indeed, in one respect I cannot help feeling strongly reminded by such an assembly as the present, of the Egyptian custom which forbade to the kings the rites of sepulture until solemnly decreed after a posthumous trial by appointed judges of the State. *We* are now pursuing a similar inquiry, and are considering how far Edmund Burke is justly deserving of a title to immortal fame, brighter and more enduring far than any which can be conferred by pyramidal monuments on departed monarchs !

This celebrated man, the son of an Irish Solicitor, was born at Dublin, in the year 1730, and died in 1796. He lived in a most eventful period of the world's history, and was a conspicuous actor in its most conspicuous scenes. A new Augustan era was created in literature ; the parliament was engaged in most important discussions on its privileges ; the country was agitated to its centre by a public impeachment of six years duration, and of surpassing interest, to which it is in vain to seek a perfect parallel in the whole records of history ; and the civilized world was astounded by two successive and stupendous revolutions in America and France, of which the first has produced more enduring political effects than any other single event in man's annals ; and the second was the alternate object of the hopes and fears of Europe, and even yet continues to divide men's minds on the preponderance of its curses or its blessings. It would be difficult to find an era more marked by great events. Some of them are unexampled ; and in all Edmund Burke bore, at least, a prominent part. Whatever may be thought of his motives or objects, or whatever judgment may be ultimately formed on the wisdom of his public course, there can be no question as to the distinguished character which he filled in the world's drama at that era. His career has been charged by some with caprice and waywardness, and by others with apostacy and corruption. With *one* considerable party in the State,

he was, and is, an idol ; and by another, his name is never mentioned without execration or abuse. It would be no less contrary to my duty than inconsistent with my feelings on this occasion, to infringe the wise regulation which excludes political comment, by entering into any particular consideration of the *public* character and conduct of Edmund Burke. If the subject of this Lecture were one totally unconnected with your feelings and interests, let me say, for instance, *ancient coins and medals*, you would probably receive my statements with attention and credence, unless I thought fit to exercise the privilege of an antiquarian, and try your credulity a little too much ; but on the character of a man whose influence was exerted so recently and powerfully in our own public affairs, many of you have, probably, formed strong and decided opinions, which I should employ this chair most improperly, if I were to use it, to controvert. It is not the object of our assembly—it is not the task entrusted to me. Whatever may be my views on that subject (and they are strong and decided), in this Literary Hall, this Temple of the Muses, I shall altogether abstain from any inquiry into Edmund Burke's *public* character and conduct, except as it may be necessary to illustrate his literary productions. I wish to be *understood* as bestowing my warm panegyrics *only on his literary and personal character*.

The exquisite style which throws such an irresistible charm over all his compositions, bewitching the reader and taking him completely captive ; the matchless beauty of language and felicity of illustration which pervade all the disquisitions of this prince of orators, even on the most intricate and technical subjects, and which compel political economy and legal points to furnish materials for the exercise of the powers of a fancy, under whose magic wand the most barren topics become fruitful and the most dull instinct with grace, are familiar to every reader, and are the admiration of every reader of taste. But this style, it is said, is too figurative, and, indeed, exaggerated ; the reader is stifled with roses, and the student corrupted with excess of ornament. Burke's imagination often runs

riot, and some of his noblest passages are in danger of degenerating into bombast. This is the objection and complaint; and I do not deny that he is sometimes open to it, for it is the very nature and tendency of such a mental constitution as his to run into the faults ascribed to him. But it is useless to complain of an attribute and essential part of the nature of the faculty. No great writer, conspicuous for the gift of imagination, and whose golden pages are the delight and admiration of mankind, is free from it. The great Father of Poetry has conferred on horses the gift, not only of speech, but of prophesy; the daring of Æschylus has often carried him the step over from the sublime to the bombastic; our own Shakespeare has perpetually allowed his fancy to run wild; and even Milton, with every advantage which the constant study and familiar knowledge of the authors of every age and nation could give him, has too frequently suspended the interest of his awful poem and forgotten the proper limits of the human powers, by making, as Pope says, "God the Father turn a school divine." We must not quarrel with the exuberance which is the certain indication and never-failing companion of the richness of the plant; although I admit it to afford a legitimate subject for observation, if pointed out, not in the spirit of captious and envious depreciation, as it has too often been, but of genuine criticism, for the purpose of instruction and caution to those who may be misled by false lights and deluded by meretricious beauties. The style of Burke is like the spear of Achilles, fit for the hero's hands alone. I admit, too, that an ornate style has its disadvantages. It is apt to mislead the generality of readers from the matter to the manner—from the sense to the sound—from the subject to the music, of the sentences; nor is it without ground, that men who feel deeply for the interests of their race, have so strongly protested against the adoption of a style which has been too often successfully employed to mask or gild corruption, and to ridicule or depreciate Truth. The greatest master of eloquence is, by universal consent, the first of Athenian orators, Demosthenes. *His* sentences are severe, simple, and mostly free from any admixture of figure or orna-

ment; but we must not, therefore, presume them composed without art. On the contrary, it is matter of historic knowledge and intrinsic evidence, that they were elaborated with the greatest care, and were the subject of continuous attention; so that every word, and we may say syllable, of the immortal Phillippics, has its place allotted, by the express design of the author. In the later ages of Greece, in the decline of the republics, a false taste prevailed. The Rhetoricians of that epoch corrupted eloquence, by deserting the lessons and example of their illustrious master. A similar vice infected the compositions of Roman literature at a similar era in Roman history. But the graces and sweetness of Plato and Cicero are still regarded as models, and Burke may, therefore, plead high authority in his defence. Indeed, I must declare, that I consider Edmund Burke one of the very greatest masters of language and style whom the world has ever known,—one of the wondrous three, to whom we may apply the description of the epic poets, and say that—

“ Three *speakers* in three distant ages born,

“ Greece, Italy, and England, did adorn ;”

distinguished completely from the Grecian Demosthenes, but very much akin to the Roman Cicero—and proudly asserting for barbaric Britain, as his rivals would have deemed it, kindred and co-equal honours with Greek and Roman fame! The apostrophe of Mr. Canning [*New Morality*] is no less just than noble—

“ Oh ! large of soul—of genius unconfin’d !

“ Born to instruct, delight, and mend mankind—

“ Burke ! in whose breast a Roman ardour glow’d,

“ Whose copious tone with Grecian sweetness flow’d—

“ What, tho’ thy venturous spirit loved to urge

“ The labouring theme to reason’s utmost verge,

“ Kindling and mounting from th’ enraptured sight,

“ Still anxious wonder watch’d thy daring flight !

“ While vulgar minds with mean malignant stare,

“ Gazed up, the triumph of thy fall to share !—

“ Poor triumph ! price of that extorted praise,

“ Which still to daring genius envy pays.”

Burke ushered his first acknowledged work into the world in 1756, in the 26th year of his age. It is entitled "A Vindication of Natural Society," and is a professed imitation of the style, and a sarcastic refutation of the mode of argument used by Lord Bolingbroke. The imitation of manner is eminently successful ; and the sentences in their rythm display that natural sensibility to the beauty of language which gave early promise of the future excellence of their author ; but it may be doubted whether they rivalled what Lord Brougham, in his *Address to the Glasgow Students*, described as " the lovely and inimitable measures of Bolingbroke." The argument is an ingenious string of paradoxes, and was only an ironical one in support of the view which the eloquence of Rousseau has rendered so delusively bewitching ; viz., the superiority of savage over civilized life. This position has found in later times no less a man than the American President, Jefferson, to support it, with apparent sincerity and calmness ; but *Burke* never for a moment seriously entertained the belief which he so rhetorically expounds. His intention was to expose what he conceived to be the prevailing and dangerous fallacy of Lord Bolingbroke, of arguing entirely on *one* side, and pointing out *evils*, from which no Institution is, or can be, exempt.

This effort of his youthful genius was almost immediately followed by his well-known " Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful," which, notwithstanding the youth of the author, and the severe criticisms that have been justly made upon the unphilosophical character of many of its positions, still maintains a place among the popular works of our literature. I think this may be easily accounted for. The work is characterized, though in a minor degree to his later productions, by the peculiar genius of its author ; and is, therefore, full of interesting observations, eloquently and elegantly expressed, and of illustrations felicitously introduced. Merits like these will always reap their reward ; and the pages of a rhetorical painter will be perused with interest, when the reasonings of the philosopher are neglected. The absurdities and difficulties into which Burke is sometimes driven by his theory of resolving the emotion of *sublimity* to

the feeling of terror, and that again to *pain*, which last is, therefore, according to him, the ultimate cause of the sublime ; have been often and justly exposed. Such a theory, it is obvious, cannot satisfactorily account for many objects which excite the emotion of sublimity without terror, as the distant Alps and the interior of St. Peter's. And Burke is compelled to support the strange paradox (to which he devotes a section,) that *pain is the cause of delight*. This position might have recommended him to the Stoic school of philosophers, but will hardly pass current with us at the present day.

Let us proceed to consider his first important publications relating to public affairs. I shall not stay to discuss the merits of his earliest works ; "A Short Account of a Short Administration," (which is merely a summary of the conduct of the Marquis of Rockingham's ministry, of which Burke was a member) ; his "Observations on the State of the Nation ;" or even his powerful "Thoughts on the Discontents." Although these works, like all his compositions, discuss temporary affairs and transient topics on general principles which must render them ever interesting, and contain precepts of moral and political philosophy conveyed in language of equal elegance and force ; yet, they refer to the passing panorama of the hour—the party interests of the day—the prospects, hopes, and fears of the then opposition and ministry. The contests for power of that era have ceased to possess interest, and most of us are indifferent as to the grounds of personal complaint which the Marquis of Rockingham could justly prefer. A short period only intervened before one of the grandest opportunities which could fall to the lot of any man for senatorial or literary display was presented by the conduct of the American colonies,—and nobly indeed was that opportunity used. Side by side with the great Earl of Chatham, did Edmund Burke maintain the noble contest for the rights and liberties of their fellow-countrymen and brethren across the ocean,—and hand in hand will those illustrious champions float down the stream of time to the latest posterity,—since the consequences of the struggle which ensued from

the neglect of their energetic but rational appeals must be too important to the world ever to permit its chief characteristics to pass from the memory of men. The petitions of our American colonists were first preferred in the tones of humble complaint ; but the contempt with which that complaint was received, produced its natural, nay, necessary effect, in the irritation of the people, and their voice was no longer heard in querulous whispers, but in the thunders of indignant remonstrance and determined defiance. The enlightened statesman and accomplished orator, whose character I am now considering, in his celebrated speech in the House of Commons, on moving his "Resolutions for conciliation with America," made use of all the resources of his genius and learning to persuade the government and legislature to accede to the demands of the colonies. In vain ! The treasures of a learning as various as profound, collected from all quarters of the globe, and from every epoch of history—the splendours of an eloquence as dignified as it was animated, were most fortunately, as it has happened, for the interests of both countries, thrown away, at least as regarded the immediate object of their exertion. They could not, indeed, be lost—but must ever remain : the model of senatorial oratory, the study of politicians, and the admiration of rhetoricians !

I shall here pause to examine this noble speech, as it is an exemplar, and will shew you how a subject may and should be treated in the legislature. He thus opens his plan :

"The proposition *is peace*. Not peace through the medium of war ; not peace to be hunted through the labyrinth of intricate and endless negotiations ; not peace to arise out of universal discord, fomented from principle, in all parts of the empire ; not peace to depend on the juridical determination of perplexing questions, or the precise marking the shadowy boundaries of a complex government. It is simple peace, sought in its natural course, and in its ordinary haunts—it is peace sought in the spirit of peace, and laid in principles purely pacific. I propose, by removing the ground of the difference, and by restoring the *former unsuspecting confidence of the colonies in the mother country*, to give permanent satisfaction to your people ; and (far from a scheme of ruling by discord) to reconcile them to each other in the same act, and by the bond of the very same interest, which reconciles them to British government."

He then refers to the elements of the inquiry, beginning with the *population* of America, which he thus felicitously describes:

“Such is the strength with which population shoots in that part of the world, that state the numbers as high as we will, whilst the dispute continues, the exaggeration ends. Whilst we are *discussing* any given magnitude, they are *grown* to it. Whilst we spend our time in deliberating on the mode of governing two millions, we shall find we have millions more to manage. Your children do not grow faster from infancy to manhood, than they spread from families to communities, and from villages to nations.”

He passes on to the *commerce* between this country and America, and, after detailing its wonderful increase and extent in a short period, he thus addresses the House on the reflections naturally suggested by it:

“Let us, however, before we descend from this noble eminence, reflect that this growth of our national prosperity has happened within the short period of the life of man. It has happened within 68 years. There are those alive whose memory might touch the two extremities. For instance, my Lord Bathurst might remember all the stages of the progress. He was in 1704 of an age at least to be made to comprehend such things. He was then old enough *acta parentum jam legere, et quæ sit poterit cognoscere virtus*. Suppose, Sir, that the angel of this auspicious youth, foreseeing the many virtues, which have made him one of the most amiable, as he is one of the most fortunate men of his age, had opened to him in vision, that, when, in the fourth generation, the third prince of the house of Brunswick had sat twelve years on the throne of that nation, which (by the happy issue of moderate and healing counsils) was to be made Great Britain, he should see his son lord chancellor of England, turn back the current of hereditary dignity to its fountain, and raise him to an higher rank of peerage, whilst he enriched the family with a new one;—if amidst these bright and happy scenes of domestic honour and prosperity, that angel should have drawn up the curtain, and unfolded the rising glories of his country, and whilst he was gazing with admiration on the then commercial grandeur of England, the genius should point out to him a little speck, scarce visible in the mass of the national interest, a small seminal principle, rather than a formed body, and should tell him,—“Young man, there is America—which at this day serves for little more than to amuse you with stories of savage men, and uncouth manners; yet shall, before you taste of death, shew itself equal to the whole of that commerce which now attracts the envy of the world. Whatever England has been growing to by a progressive increase of improvement, brought in by varieties of people, by succession of civilizing conquests and civilizing settlements in a series of 1,700 years, you shall see as much added to her

by America in the course of a single life!" If this state of his country had been foretold to him, would it not require all the sanguine credulity of youth, and all the fervid glow of enthusiasm, to make him believe it! Fortunate man, he has lived to see it! Fortunate indeed, if he lives to see nothing that shall vary the prospect, and cloud the setting of his day!"

He proceeds to examine particularly the *sources* of the wealth of America, and I cannot refrain from reading you his exquisite description of the fisheries. It is so truly like Edmund Burke, and like no one else.

"As to the wealth which the colonies have drawn from the sea by their fisheries, you had all that matter fully opened at your bar. You surely thought those acquisitions of value, for they seemed even to excite your envy; and yet the spirit, by which that enterprising employment has been exercised, ought rather, in my opinion, to have raised your esteem and admiration. And pray, Sir, what in the world is equal to it? Pass by the other parts, and look at the manner in which the people of New England have of late carried on the whale fishery. Whilst we follow them among the tumbling mountains of ice, and behold them penetrating into the deepest frozen recesses of Hudson's Bay, and Davis's Straights, whilst we are looking for them beneath the arctic circle, we hear that they have pierced into the opposite region of polar cold, that they are at the antipodes, and engaged under the frozen serpent of the south. Falkland Island, which seemed too remote and romantic an object for the grasp of national ambition, is but a stage and resting-place in the progress of their victorious industry. Nor is the equinoctial heat more discouraging to them than the accumulated winter of both the poles. We know that whilst some of them draw the line, and strike the harpoon on the coast of Africa, others run the longitude, and pursue their gigantic game along the coast of Brazil. No sea but what is vexed by their fisheries. No climate that is not witness to their toils. Neither the perseverance of Holland, nor the activity of France, nor the dexterous and firm sagacity of English enterprise, ever carried this most perilous mode of hard industry to the extent to which it has been pushed by this recent people; a people who are still, as it were, but in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood. When I contemplate these things; when I know that the colonies in general owe little or nothing to any care of ours, and that they are not squeezed into this happy form by the constraints of watchful and suspicious government, but that through a wise and salutary neglect, a generous nature has been suffered to take her own way to perfection; when I reflect upon these effects, when I see how profitable they have been to us, I feel all the pride of power sink, and all presumption in the wisdom of human contrivances melt, and die away within me. My rigour relents. I pardon something to the spirit of liberty."

This is the opening of his propositions. He has now

placed before the House the state of America. He then proceeds to grapple with the question, how she should be treated for our advantage, as well as her own. And he disposes, in a most masterly manner, of the argument for resorting to *force*. After stating many cogent reasons against such a policy, he mainly relies on the *moral causes* of the disobedience of the Colonists, viz. their temper and character derived from their English ancestors—their love of liberty—their impatience of oppression in any form, and especially of taxation—the nature and strength of their religious feelings—and, lastly, the existence of *slavery* in the Southern States; the effect of which he justly states to be “to make those who are free most proud and jealous of their freedom.” He then assigns a *physical* cause for the disobedience of the colonies, which he says is “hardly less powerful than the rest.”

“The last cause of this disobedient spirit in the colonies is hardly less powerful than the rest, as it is not merely moral, but laid deep in the natural constitution of things. Three thousand miles of ocean lie between you and them. No contrivance can prevent the effect of this distance, in weakening government. Seas roll, and months pass, between the order and the execution: and the want of a speedy explanation of a single point, is enough to defeat a whole system. You have, indeed, winged ministers of vengeance, who carry your bolts in their pounces to the remotest verge of the sea. But there a power steps in, that limits the arrogance of raging passions and furious elements, and says, “So far shalt thou go, and no farther.” Who are you, that should fret and rage, and bite the chains of nature? Nothing worse happens to you, than does to all nations who have extensive empire; and it happens in all the forms into which empire can be thrown. In large bodies, the circulation of power must be less vigorous at the extremities. Nature has said it. The Turk cannot govern Egypt, and Arabia, and Curdistan, as he governs Thrace; nor has he the same dominion in Crimea and Algiers, which he has at Brusa and Smyrna. Despotism itself is obliged to truck and huckster. The sultan gets such obedience as he can. He governs with a loose rein, that he may govern at all; and the whole of the force and vigour of his authority in his centre, is derived from a prudent relaxation in all his borders. Spain, in her provinces, is, perhaps, not so well obeyed as you are in yours. She complies too; she submits; she watches times. This is the immutable condition, the eternal law, of extensive and detached empire.”

He now points out what he conceives to be the *true* policy—*conciliation*. After showing the impossibility of

altering the causes, moral and physical, which he has before so luminously pointed out, of the disobedient spirit of the colonies, and demonstrating that nothing has been before gained by *menaces*, he declines arguing, as *beside* the real question, whether the right of self-taxation were one for which the colonies properly contended, but confines himself to what he calls much narrower ground.

“It is not, what a lawyer tells me, I may do; but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me, I ought to do. Is a politic act the worse for being a generous one? Is no concession proper, but that which is made from your want of right to keep what you grant? Or does it lessen the grace or dignity of relaxing in the exercise of an odious claim, because you have your evidence-room full of titles, and your magazines stuffed with arms to enforce them? What signify all those titles, and all those arms? Of what avail are they, when the reason of the thing tells me, that the assertion of my title is the loss of my suit; and that I could do nothing but wound myself by the use of my own weapons?”

He then proceeds to consult, as he expresses it, the “genius of the oracle of the British Constitution,” for examples, and refers to the conduct of England to Ireland Wales, Chester, and Durham, for the purpose of shewing that a rigorous treatment has been always unsuccessful, and a mild one the reverse; and that “freedom, and not servitude, is the cure for anarchy; as religion, and not atheism, is the true remedy for superstition.” In the course of this profound and truly masterly historical review, the philosophical lesson to be deduced from it, is displayed with equal eloquence and power.

He then proceeds through his resolutions *seriatim*, and afterwards deals with the objections which he anticipates. He passes on to contrast his propositions with those of Lord North; and after exposing the latter, he concludes with the following peroration, of which it is praise enough to say, that it is worthy of the author and the subject.

“My hold of the colonies is in the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges, and equal protection. These are ties, which, though light as air, are strong as links of iron. Let the colonies always keep the idea of their civil rights associated with your government;—they will cling and grapple to you; and no force under heaven will be of power to tear them from their allegiance. But let it be once

understood, that your government may be one thing, and their privileges another; that these two things may exist without any mutual relation; the cement is gone; the cohesion is loosened; and every thing hastens to decay and dissolution. As long as you have the wisdom to keep the sovereign authority of this country as the sanctuary of liberty, the sacred temple consecrated to our common faith, wherever the chosen race and sons of England worship freedom, they will turn their faces towards you. The more they multiply, the more friends you will have; the more ardently they love liberty, the more perfect will be their obedience. Slavery they can have any where. It is a weed that grows in every soil. They may have it from Spain, they may have it from Prussia. But until you become lost to all feeling of your true interest and your natural dignity, freedom they can have from none but you. This is the commodity of price, of which you have the monopoly. This is the true act of navigation, which binds to you the commerce of the colonies, and through them secures to you the wealth of the world."

"All this, I know well enough, will sound wild and chimerical to the profane herd of those vulgar and mechanical politicians, who have no place among us; a sort of people who think that nothing exists but what is gross and material; and who, therefore, far from being qualified to be directors of the great movement of empire, are not fit to turn a wheel in the machine. But to men truly initiated and rightly taught, these ruling and master principles, which in the opinion of such men as I have mentioned, have no substantial existence, are in truth every thing, and all in all. Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together. If we are conscious of our situation, and glow with zeal to fill our places as becomes our station and ourselves, we ought to auspicate all our public proceedings on America with the old warning of the church, *Sursum corda!* We ought to elevate our minds to the greatness of that trust to which the order of Providence has called us. By adverting to the dignity of this high calling, our ancestors have turned a savage wilderness into a glorious empire, and have made the most extensive, and the only honourable, conquests; not by destroying, but by promoting the wealth, the number, the happiness of the human race. Let us get an American revenue as we have got an American empire. English privileges have made it all that it is; English privileges alone will make it all it can be."

Such is the speech which I have submitted so fully to your attention, because it conveys such a perfect idea of Burke, and does more than a whole day's talk could do, to impress you practically and deeply with his characteristic merits. You must have felt the weight with which he strikes a blow. You will be at no loss to understand why Lord

Erskine declared in one of his finest forensic orations, [*For Horne Tooke*,] that he was deeply indebted for his style of eloquence to the study of the pages of Mr. Burke, and that he should compel his children, as an essential part of their education, to copy again and again their immortal contents. You must agree with me, that it is difficult to panegyricize too highly such a composition. It is one not meant for the passing interests of a day, or the party conflicts of an hour—nor does it resemble the magnificent bursts of Lord Chatham, adapted to their time, and place, and auditory; but it is to be read in every country and every age, as a permanent repository of great political truths, and as an exemplar for all future statesmen. If, as we are told by Quintilian, the admiration of Cicero be an essential characteristic of a true orator, I will be bold enough to declare, that a genuine sympathy with this oration of Burke is a test of a true statesman. It is, indeed, a monument affording matter for deeply interesting speculation. We are bound to recognise the gracious dispensation of Providence, which has so truly educed “good out of evil,” and has converted our foolish neglect of Burke’s salutary counsels to our benefit, and made that neglect the means of ten-fold blessings upon either nation. Sad was the struggle, as it has been nobly described by one of the first of modern poets, *Campbell*, in his “*Gertrude of Wyoming*,”

“ Sad was the year, by proud oppression driv’n,
 “ When transatlantic liberty arose;
 “ Not in the sunshine and the light of heav’n,
 “ But wrapt in whirlwinds and begirt with woes,
 “ Amidst the strife of fratricidal foes;
 “ Her birth-star was the light of burning plains,
 “ Her baptism is the weight of blood that flows
 “ From kindred hearts—the blood of British veins,
 “ And famine tracks her steps—and pestilential pains.”

And yet, how wide is the difference, and how beneficial, between our subject colony and our kindred country! Rival, it may be, but rival in that generous race of arts and commerce, where they who lose are the better for the efforts they have even vainly made for the prize.

About the period of the delivery of that speech, appeared the famous "*Letters of Junius*," in the "Public Advertiser." The alleged authorship of those extraordinary compositions afforded the world a subject for endless speculation at the time, and has continued to puzzle it ever since. We are no nearer to the solution of the difficulty now than then; for time and accident have thrown hardly any additional light on this intricate question. The palm has been claimed for several men, some otherwise distinguished by their political and literary talents, and among them Burke was considered in his own day, and has ever since continued in many quarters to be looked upon as their author; probably for the reason given by Dr. Johnson, viz. that no other person known to literature *could* have written those letters. It has been thought more reasonable to believe that Burke was their author, than that two such suns as himself and Junius should be shining in the political hemisphere at the same time. In the various disquisitions on this subject, with which the world has been filled—the constant objection urged against this theory has been, that the style of Burke is completely dissimilar to that of Junius; the one being distinguished by its gorgeous amplification, and the other by its terseness and condensation. But the admirers of Burke reply that it may be without much difficulty supposed, that such a master of language was able to alter his style, to suit his purpose and escape detection, as he might have disguised his hand-writing, and that both styles, have, at any rate, this merit in common, that each is perfect in its kind. Many collateral and extrinsic arguments have been adduced on behalf of other men, among whom Sir P. Francis seems to be the general favourite. Mr. Butler, in his interesting "*Reminiscences*," adopts a new and middle hypothesis, and considers that the only mode of reconciling the external and internal evidence is to suppose Sir P. Francis the *amanuensis* of Junius. Every death among the eminent men who were closely connected with the persons and events of the memorable era in which the letters were written, has excited a fallacious hope that the secret would be out at last, or, at any rate, some additional

light be thrown upon it. A few months ago Lord^g Grenville was gathered to his fathers, and then the mysterious veil was to be drawn. More recently, the son of Sir P. Francis was summoned from the world; when again a hope has been raised that something would transpire on this interesting problem. And I am informed, that at the sale of Sir Phillip's library, which took place very lately, some MSS. and documents were discovered, which afford very cogent, additional, and circumstantial proof of his title to the authorship. Those who wish to pursue this subject further in reference to Burke, may consult Mr. Prior's interesting "Memoirs;" where that gentleman has collected, among other proofs, the concurring testimonies of his friends and cotemporaries, that one other laurel must be added to his wreath, and that the elegant "Letters of Junius" must be read as the satires of Burke.

His next work is a reprint of his celebrated speech on "Economical Reform," delivered in 1780. It introduced to Parliament his "Plan of reform in the constitution of several parts of the public economy," of which the object was to effect a complete alteration in the arrangement of the public offices. A great number of useless ones were abolished, the salaries of many were reduced, and, in short, an entirely new adjustment was made of the civil list. Burke was obliged to introduce the subject two or three times in Parliament before he could succeed in carrying it through; for, although Gibbon, himself a sinecurist, whose office was abolished by Burke's bill, said, [*Memoirs,*] that "he never could forget the delight with which the diffusive and ingenious orator was heard by all sides of the House, and even by those whose existence he proscribed," it may be, nevertheless, easily believed, that those who were charmed by the oratory, might not so much relish the reform, and would not be backward in *voting against* the speaker, whose eloquence they might admire. And even in more exalted quarters, a similar repugnance was felt, if we may credit the humourous description of the caustic satirist of that day, *Peter Pindar*, [*Lousiad, canto i.*] who says,

"Not with more horror did their eye-balls work,

"Convulsive on the patriotic Burke—

" When guilty of economy, the *crime* !
 " Edmund wide wandered from the *true sublime* ;
 " And cat-like, watchful of the flesh and fish,
 " Cribb'd from the royal table many a dish—
 " Saw every slice of bread and butter cut,
 " Each apple told, and number'd every nut ;
 " Convinc'd that in his plan of state-salvation,
 " To starve the palace was to save the nation."

It was, as the chancellor of the exchequer not long ago observed, [*Debate on Pensions, Dec. 1837,*] " the greatest step ever made in economical reform." But the glory is behind. One of the offices most reduced in emoluments was that which he himself then held, the paymastership of the forces. Mr. Prior, in the work to which I have just referred, I am afraid too truly tells us, that his " sacrifices gained from the country at large, and parliament, just as much credit as such things voluntarily given, usually do, little notice and no recompense." Let us hope, however, that a better time is at hand, when such conduct will be duly appreciated by cotemporaries, and, at any rate, let posterity do justice to Burke for such an act of noble disinterestedness.

Milton has told us, that " Eloquence the soul, song charms the sense ;" and if Mozart and Rossini can so justly entrance their audiences, I may say, that the superior powers of a Burke should exercise a similar spell over the higher faculties of our nature. But I am warned by the time, not to give way to the desire which I feel of calling your attention more minutely to this speech, justly pronounced by the chancellor of the exchequer, on the occasion to which I have before alluded, as " masterly and unrivalled."

Such services, such talents as those of Burke, were, I regret to say, not then duly appreciated by his constituents, the citizens of Bristol. He was rejected at the ensuing election, on account of the unpopularity of some of his proceedings. I should not hesitate elsewhere to say, that I think his conduct, in the respects then objected to him, as equally wise and liberal, viz. his advocacy of the causes of the Americans and Roman Catholics, his vote in favour of Lord

Beauchamp's bill to abolish imprisonment for debt, and his support of propositions for the removal of restrictions on Irish commerce. I shall, here, however, take up much narrower ground in his justification, and say, that his conduct was, at any rate, disinterested and courageous, for he pursued the course he did solely from *principle*, and at the almost certain danger of displeasing his constituents. I am alluding to this circumstance in his public life, because it was the occasion of the delivery of a speech, which was his next published work. This speech is at once so eloquent, and so full of moral and political truths—so bold and independent, and yet respectful to the assembly he was addressing, that I confess I never can read it without admiration. I recommend its attentive perusal to all who desire to see in what manner Edmund Burke thought that a public assembly of his countrymen should be addressed, satisfied that they are well able to feel and appreciate the excellence they can never reach, and may even be unable, critically, to explain.

The next important subject which called forth his powers was one to which I shall refer, although it partakes, undoubtedly, of a political character, because all considerations of political expediency, however important, must sink into comparative insignificance when weighed with the absorbing moral and religious principles connected with it. I allude to the *abolition* of the *slave trade*, one of the great glories of our country, and to which Burke contributed his powerful aid. I repeat, that considerations of political interest are merely collateral to an inquiry where our moral duty to our fellow-men in recognising the rights conferred on them by our common Father, is clear and distinct. The philosophical wisdom of antiquity promulgated, and modern moralists and magistrates have adopted, the celebrated aphorism, "*Fiat justitia, ruat cælum,*" of which the sense may be freely given in the noble maxim, "Be just and fear not," and which is the foundation of the sublime truth, that "*Nothing which is morally wrong can be politically right.*" You are all well aware that the late Mr. Wilberforce perseveringly and ceaselessly directed the attention of parlia-

ment and the country to this important subject for many years, until he finally succeeded in effecting the abolition, not only of the slave trade, but of the *system of slavery* itself, throughout the British dominions. The evening of his life was cheered by the glory of his triumph! Mr. Pitt, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Fox, assisted his generous endeavours by their splendid eloquence, and the last of these statesmen in introducing the famous bill of 1806, which completely carried out the principle established by the temporary measure of 1792, and abolished the British slave trade, at once, and for ever, thus referred to the speeches formerly delivered by Edmund Burke upon the subject:—"Surely, Sir, it does not yet remain to be argued, that to carry men away by violence to slavery in distant countries—to use the expression of an illustrious man, now no more, Mr. Burke, a man distinguished in every way, and in nothing more than for his great humanity—is not a traffic in the labour of man, but in the man himself." [*Hansard, Parl. Deb.* 1806, vol. 17.] And afterwards, he says, "I would refer gentlemen to, perhaps, the most brilliant and convincing speech that ever was, I believe, delivered in this or any other place, by that consummate master of eloquence, of which it would be impossible to report the manner,—for the voice, the gesture, the manner, were not to be described. Oh! si illum vidisses, si illum audivisses!" Well may most of us say, with Mr. Fox, "Oh! could we but have seen him, could we but have heard him!"

I shall read a short extract from his speech in 1789, in answer to what was then, and has frequently since been, urged as the main reason against any abolition, viz. the happiness of the slaves. Mr. Burke tells us, [*Speeches*, vol. iii.] in the spirit of a philosophy equally true and dignified, "Nothing can make a *happy slave* but a *degraded man*. In proportion as the mind grows callous to its degradation, and all sense of manly pride is lost, the slave feels comfort. In fact, he is no longer a man. If I were to define a man, I would say with Shakspeare,

"Man is a being—holding large discourse,

"Looking before and after."

“A slave is incapable of looking either before or after.”

The remainder of his most important works, besides his speeches in parliament, relate to two subjects which exercised a great influence over his life, and which require too extensive and separate a consideration to allow me to enter into them now: I must, therefore, reserve them for my next Lecture. You need not be informed that I refer to the state of Indian affairs, with the trial of Warren Hastings; and the French Revolution. His other works consist of several very able letters on the “Popery laws,” advocating their repeal, and the propriety of admitting Catholics to the elective franchise; a few minor political essays; his contributions to the *Annual Register*, (to which he was a chief contributor for many years,) and an “*Abridgement of English History*.”

This history was one of his earliest compositions, having been published in 1757, and probably written merely for the sake of remuneration. It comes up to a more recent period than *Milton's*, (which stops at the Conquest,) viz. to the reign of King John; and is commonly supposed to have been discontinued in consequence of Mr. Hume undertaking the same task. But, though so limited in its scope, scanty in its materials, and hasty in its composition, it may be read, especially by young students, with pleasure and advantage, and we cannot but deeply regret that it was not completed in a manner worthy of the author. No undertaking could be more worthy of Burke, than a complete history of his native land. The great men of antiquity seem to have regarded such an undertaking almost as a duty, and we must search for the finest writers, the most penetrating spirits among the historians. Herodotus and Livy, Thucydides and Tacitus, are still the models; the former of elegant perspicuity and lively description, and the latter of sententious force. Until the appearance of the ‘*Pictorial History*,’ almost all entire histories of this great country, of any note, had been expressly written with partial views, and for peculiar objects. Two hundred years ago, Milton complained that, “If the Athenians made their

“small deeds great and renowned by their eloquent writers, England hath had her noble achievements made small by the unskilful handling of monks and mechanics.” [*Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty. B. ii.*] Since that day several writers have undertaken the task, and certainly relieved us from much of that imputation. No one will say that Hume had a great deal of the monk or mechanic in him, nor that his history has been “unskilfully handled.” His “inimitable graces,” as Gibbon called them, have thrown a charm of style over his work which it would be difficult, perhaps, to excel; but his warmest admirers would hardly claim for him the character of impartiality. His unfairness has been often exposed; and, indeed, I do not think that he desired to make a secret of his design in writing as a partizan of the Stuart dynasty. The spirit of the advocate peeps out at every page. Different great classes in the State have had their able partizans, as the Catholics, in Dr. Lingard, and the Puritans, in Neale. Rapin’s excellent work may lay claim to the character of impartiality, and Henry’s to that of utility; but the style of both is dry and barren, and the former has the incurable fault of being written by a foreigner. Sir James Mackintosh’s Fragmentary Treatise is useful, as far as it goes, but it shared the fate of every thing undertaken by that accomplished scholar, and contains just enough to excite a hope that was disappointed. I admit that some particular portions of our annals have been ably illustrated, witness Robertson, Clarendon, and Burnet; and I hail with satisfaction the recent appearance and popularity of the “Pictorial History,”* to which I have before referred, written on the true principle of philosophically investigating those important events which have successively influenced the opinions, feelings, manners, and comforts of the nation; instead of following, with minute and tedious accuracy, the personal histories of corrupt or feeble sovereigns. Too much, indeed, is history (as hitherto written), subject to Locke’s reproach of it, in his admirable Thoughts on Education, when he says, that “All the entertainment and talk of history is of nothing but of fighting and killing.”—

* Published by C. Knight and Co.

But I must, nevertheless, repeat my regret, that a writer so admirably qualified in every way as Edmund Burke, to compose the annals of his country contented himself with the fragment he has left us, and did not feel that he owed it to that country to devote his gigantic powers to the imperishable record of its illustrious events. Such a work, from such a hand, would have been, indeed, a monument more enduring than brass, and must have survived so long as literature remains cultivated among men !

His "*Abridgment*" contains, also a fragment which he has entitled an "*Essay towards a History of the Laws of England.*" A more important subject, and one more worthy of his pen, he could not have undertaken ; and after the specimen which he has left us in the "Report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the causes of the duration of the trial of Warren Hastings," there can be no doubt of the masterly manner in which it would have been executed. The author would have constantly deserted the narrative for reflection,—and the subject, which would in no part have been treated in the spirit of a technical lawyer, would have lost even the character of merely interesting narration, and have expanded into one of philosophical disquisition. The innate statesman's spirit of the writer would have pervaded and animated the whole ; and it would have been found invaluable in the Herculean attempt to simplify the Statute Book. Our regret, indeed, at Burke's omission to complete this history of our laws, must be, doubtless, abated, as regards the loss of an elegant and perspicuous narrative, by the manner in which Sir Wm. Blackstone has executed a similar task in his popular "*Commentaries*;" but the loss of the general history of the empire forces us to feel the truth of Goldsmith's complaint, [*Retaliation*,] that Burke,

"Born for the universe, narrowed his mind,

"And to party gave up what was meant for mankind."

The interest of sections of the community—the ministerial struggles of the day—absorbed that splendid genius and that extensive learning which *should have been* devoted to works of universal importance and of enduring character.

LECTURE, &c.

PART II.

THAT extensive portion of the globe called India, affords one of the most interesting subjects for investigation in the whole compass of historical inquiry. Its immense antiquity, which, after we have rejected all the fabulous claims asserted for it by designing or deluded historians, we must still feel to extend to a period so remote that the present states of Europe seem the creatures of yesterday ;—its early civilization, which, though clearly shown by Mr. Mill to have been greatly and absurdly exaggerated, is, yet, so far admitted by modern scholars, as to divide the learned world on the question of its superior claims over Egypt to the character of the first country on the earth inhabited by civilized man ;—its curious and stationary classifications of society, which have endured through centuries of time, and through successive revolutions of government ;—its reputed exhaustless sources of wealth, and that mysterious charm which has been ever thrown over the Oriental nations by the people of Europe, and which have tempted so many and various expeditions of conquest and commerce, from the hostile invasion of Alexander to the recent peaceful attempt to navigate the Euphrates, and the accomplishment of a route across the Isthmus of Suez ;—all combine to impart to *India* an interest which has been felt by reflecting minds in every age and nation, and has made it the subject of philosophical inquiry by ancient and modern writers, by Strabo and Diodorus, by Robertson and Mill. But to the sources of interest thus presented to every contemplative scholar, must be added one, which to *Englishmen* makes that region of the globe an object of peculiarly anxious attention : *We are its rulers*. The enormous population of that country, consisting of one hundred millions ; its fertile plains extending through several degrees of latitude, and teeming with pro-

ducts which have become with us, necessities of existence, are under the dominion and controul of the British people ; and by a late most important act of the legislature, are now thrown open as an unlimited field for British industry, enterprise, and wealth. Motives of self-interest and of duty, therefore, alike demand of us to become acquainted with our mighty colony. We are instigated by the former motives, that we may not be foolishly wasteful of resources, which properly and wisely applied would be productive of immense benefit to the country which supplies, and the country which receives them. And we are instigated by motives of the latter description, from the obligations which are cast upon us by our relation of rulers, resulting from the rights to revenue and allegiance. The order of Providence which has subjugated India to our sway, has imposed upon us the imperative duty of carefully watching over the vast interests thus committed to our charge. The rights and duties of humanity demand from us the most attentive examination into the condition of our subjects, that we may apply those principles of government which are best adapted to them. The vulgar ambition of wielding an iron sceptre over a prostrate people is rapidly passing away in the enlightened portions of the globe. Governors and governed are learning the reciprocal rights and duties which necessarily and inherently attach to their position. Under the influence of this feeling, it is difficult to pronounce with certainty what beneficial results may not be expected to follow in every direction ; but we may be permitted to indulge the warmest anticipations, and the most sanguine hopes for the future destinies of mankind !

India has been the subject of the frequent inroads of invaders, from the transient conquest of Alexander and the sweeping descent of Timour, to the final expulsion of the French, and defeat of the natives by the English within the last half century. For a considerable period, India was under the Mahommedan sway, with results which Mr. Mill has ably shown to have been advantageous to the much less civilized Hindoos. The Portuguese, the Dutch, and the French, have successively shared with the English in the

dominion and trade of India, and have presented serious military and commercial difficulties in the way of British revenue and empire. Some of these obstacles once acquired a formidable character ; but, eventually, the arms and enterprise of Britain achieved their usual fortune, and gradually acquired the immense dominion we now possess. It is impossible for me, in the limited period allotted, to suffer myself to be drawn even into the most rapid and summary historical narrative of the mode in which that power was gradually and finally acquired. You may read it in the charming narrative of Robertson, and the philosophic history of Mill. I must necessarily confine myself to much narrower ground.

The period in which Indian affairs were first drawn prominently to the public attention, and when English statesmen seriously occupied themselves, and interested parliament in the subject of our Eastern empire, was between the years 1780 and 1790. Warren Hastings had succeeded to the vigorous, but often corrupt and cruel, government of Lord Clive, and was contesting with one of the most formidable opponents whom the English ever encountered. You anticipate my referring to the celebrated Tippoo Saib, who had succeeded his no less celebrated and dreaded father, Hyder Ali, in 1783, the year in which Mr. Fox introduced into parliament his famous East India bill. The object of that bill was to vest a superintending power over the administration of India by the East India Company, in a Board of Controul to be appointed by the Crown. It was urged against the measure that the natural, nay, necessary effect and secret design of it was, to bestow on the Whig ministers the enormous patronage of India, and to perpetuate through that influence a dictatorship in Mr. Fox. An outcry to that effect was so vehemently and successfully raised by Mr. Pitt and the court party through the country, and the monarch and people were so alarmed by the terrors of the ministerial despotism, which the Whigs were alleged to intend establishing, that Mr. Pitt was borne most triumphantly into office, and was enabled to maintain his place to the almost total exclusion of his rivals, for

nearly a quarter of a century. *He* found it necessary, however, to direct his immediate attention to the subject of Indian affairs, and introduced the Act by which the Board of Controul was constituted. But, notwithstanding all the outcry which was raised against Mr. Fox and the Whigs for their alleged attempt to grasp at patronage, impartial historians have declared, that an attentive examination of the two bills reveals that Mr. Pitt's bill effected the object he charged his opponents with designing, as completely, though more covertly. [See Mill's admirable and searching examination, v. 5, c. 9.] He was exposed night after night to the argument of Fox, the wit of Sheridan, and the splendid declamation of Burke, who laid open with great ability the designs of the author, and the evils of the bill. Burke astonished the House of Commons throughout these discussions by his extensive and intimate acquaintance with Indian affairs; and his speeches on "Mr. Fox's bill," and the "Nabob of Arcot's debts," justly excited the admiration of his contemporaries, and remain for the instruction and delight of all succeeding times. The future denouncer of Warren Hastings, the eloquent anathematizer of Eastern oppression, may be sometimes distinctly foreseen. The course of inquiry into which Burke had entered, and the disclosures which ensued in the debates on the India bills, brought before the public eye many transactions which bore at least a suspicious appearance, and which excited in the generous, perhaps, impatient, mind of Burke the warmest indignation; for his greatest enemies must admit, that, in his earlier day, at any rate, the hatred of tyranny, and a sincere desire to vindicate the oppressed, beat nobly in his bosom.

In 1782, the House of Commons had voted resolutions strongly condemnatory of the conduct of Warren Hastings, and which had been moved and supported by the person who subsequently became his warmest, and, perhaps, ablest champion, the celebrated Mr. Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville. The contests between the Whig and Tory parties on the different East India bills, occupied parliament till Mr. Pitt's was finally carried in 1784. The next important

subject connected with Indian affairs, which engaged the attention of the House of Commons, related to the payment of the Nabob of Arcot's debts, which the ministry proposed should be made out of the public monies. Burke very strongly protested against such a course; as he contended that the debts were fraudulently contracted by the agents of the East India Company for their own purposes. The famous speech which he delivered on this subject has been pronounced by Mr. Moore, one of the greatest efforts of oratory, either ancient or modern, of which the world can boast; [*Life of Sheridan*, ch. 11,] and if we had time to examine it, I feel little doubt that you would not think the eulogium undeserved.

After a few intermediate debates in the House of Commons, Mr. Burke brought forward, in 1786, his *Articles for the Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, consisting of charges against him of almost every form of corruption and cruelty that can stain a ruler; bribery and extortion—the unjust invasion, the rapacious desolation, of provinces—the profuse and extravagant expenditure of the revenues thus iniquitously levied—and the unjust destruction of those who dared to prefer complaints, or could testify, as disagreeable witnesses against him. At the commencement of his proceedings, in his early charges, Burke was out-voted; as the ministry, or rather minister, of the day, threw a mantle over Mr. Hastings, and protected him from the dangerous attack. But, by one of those sudden, and, apparently, unaccountable changes of conduct, which puzzle us so often in private, and oftener still in public life, the protecting power was withdrawn, and Mr. Pitt supported a subsequent motion for impeaching Mr. Hastings, who was, consequently, consigned to the fate which appeared to be impending over him.

The conduct of the minister on this occasion has been the subject of severe and ingenious scrutiny; and men have passed judgment, as they always will, and necessarily must in such circumstances, according to their opinion and feeling of his character and conduct in general. The friends of Warren Hastings were, of course, violent in their denunci-

ations of what they deemed a base desertion ; some of the enemies of Mr. Pitt assumed, as the ground of his conduct, a growing jealousy and dread of Hastings's influence at court ; and others have believed that the minister was secretly not displeased at so favourable an opportunity to employ the talents of his formidable opponents in matters entirely foreign to his own policy ; while his friends have seen in his sudden and courageous union with the opposition, a sincerely noble determination to bring to condign punishment, and submit to public example a high state criminal. It is not my business to pronounce here any decided opinion one way or the other. My duty is limited to the task of narration. Whatever, therefore, were the motives and objects of those in power, Burke and his coadjutors succeeded in their endeavours to induce the House of Commons to come forward as the public prosecutors of Warren Hastings, for high crimes and misdemeanours in his office of Governor-General. Accordingly, on the 13th of February, 1788, (now upwards of half a century ago,) a day which will be ever memorable in English annals, Mr. Burke appeared in Westminster Hall, at the bar of the House of Lords, as the appointed organ of the House of Commons, to open the articles of impeachment ; and the accounts of all cotemporaneous narrators concur in the representations of splendour and interest which were presented by that important occasion. Let us imagine the august scene ! Let us suppose ourselves in that noble Hall, on which the lapse of centuries has conferred an additional interest to what is derived from its architectural magnificence, crowded with all that was illustrious by rank, power, and intellect ; with the delegated and concentrated greatness, as it were, of the empire, there assembled, to hear the complaints of a people, separated from us by thousands of leagues, and by every conceivable variety of language, manners, and religion, and whose only claim to the attention of the congregated judges, arose from their dependent weakness, and their supposed miseries and oppressions ! Let us imagine that assembly, listening with breathless silence to the awful eloquence of Sheridan and Burke, while denounc-

ing the crimes of tyranny, depicting its horrors, and exposing its consequences with such searching power, that the gathered multitudes shook with sympathetic terror, and trembled at imaginary spoliations and visionary murders, as if committed under their eyes ;—the greatest efforts of those great men, thus consecrating their mighty talents to the cause of Liberty, and laying them as a votive offering on the sacred altar of Justice !

It is in vain to look in the whole compass of history for a spectacle more imposing. The prosecution of Verres, on the complaint of the people of Sicily, like that of Lord Strafford, for his government in Ireland, (which are the only proceedings in ancient or modern annals that I know of at all analogous to it,) referred to tyrannies of a much less extensive kind ; to misconduct of delegated rulers over neighbouring islands of the mother state, and over a people whose complaints could easily reach the seat of imperial government. The prosecution of Verres was soon discontinued ; and the orations of Cicero, which remain for the pleasure of mankind, are full of invectives which were never pronounced, and may be regarded as merely rhetorical compositions. The impeachment of Lord Strafford, indeed, was carried to a complete and successful termination, and the great Wentworth expiated his apostacy on the scaffold, while affording an additional proof of the little faith that “ should be placed in Princes.” But the charges against him, though weighty were few ; the evidence was not complicated or multitudinous, and the trial was of manageable extent, and was concluded in a reasonable period. And it will be admitted by many of those who think him justly condemned, that his prosecution was instituted and carried on as much from feelings of personal malice and party spirit as of public justice. The impeachment of Warren Hastings stands distinguished in all these particulars. It referred to the alleged tyranny of a Viceroy over a country almost as extensive as Europe, and over a people whose cries had to traverse half the globe before they could reach the ears of British justice. The prosecution has certainly been alleged to have had its origin in vindictive motives on

the part of some of the managers, like Lord Strafford's ; but I do not see any sufficient evidence to warrant the suggestion ; and it certainly cannot apply to the House of Commons, who were the prosecutors. Indeed, I think this charge against the individual managers has obtained credit from what seems to me the great error committed by them, viz. the distracting multiplicity and overwhelming extent of the articles of accusation. Nothing can be more mistaken than the idea that such an accumulation of apparent difficulties is disadvantageous to the party impeached. On the contrary, they who are experienced in judicial proceedings, know well that it rather operates in his favour. The truth is, that the limited nature of human powers and the perpetual accidents that interfere in human affairs, and divert them from their otherwise natural course, render it a matter of certainty that many of such charges must remain unproved, even if there be evidence in existence sufficient to have established them. The eloquent invectives of Burke and Sheridan were poured forth, as if every thing asserted had been proved, and as if what was satisfactorily established in their own breasts, had been settled by conclusive testimony on the trial. The result was what always does and always will follow in such circumstances, that a prejudice was created in favour of the party accused, who was supposed to be unfairly suffering under the weight of talents and influence which were enough to crush the most innocent individual.* The tide of feeling turned from against the accused to his accusers, and as the crimes alleged against him were those of a ruler, which, if successful, will always secure the admiration of the vulgar-minded, whether rich or poor, high or low ; the natural prejudice to which I have just before referred, was seconded by the additional

* The great historian of the Rebellion has made a similar observation on the men accused before parliament at the beginning of the reign of Charles I. [*Vol. i. b. i. p. 13. ed. 1826.*] He says :—

“ Besides that, after the first storm, there is some compassion naturally attends men like to be in misery ; and besides the latitude of judging in those places, whereby there is room for kindness and affection, and collateral considerations to interpose ; the truth is those accusations (to which this man contributes his malice,

one arising from the nature of his character. Unfortunately the conduct of rulers must be very bad or very foolish, indeed, if it ever subjects them to any serious public disapprobation. The managers should have limited themselves to two or three of Hastings's weightiest alleged offences, and, thereon, concentrated the public attention. They might then have concluded the trial in a reasonable time, and have called for judgment, if he had been convicted, before the public feeling had cooled or turned. Warren Hastings, however, was acquitted by both houses, and was even subsequently honoured by the house which impeached him. He stands, therefore, free, by the adjudication of the constituted authorities of the land ; but as his conduct has now become matter of history, each of us may entertain an independent opinion upon it. On the one hand, in his defence, the view most generally adopted, has been the one eloquently described by Lord Erskine, [*In the trial of Stockdale for a libel on the House of Commons,*] that Warren Hastings was compelled from the very nature of the power entrusted to him, to resort to cruelty and fraud ; and that it was unjust to tax *him* with those necessary consequences which resulted from the peculiar character of our dominion in the East. On the other hand, it has been alleged that his cruelty was often unjustifiable upon any plea of necessity, and that his rapacity was greater than the exigencies of government, upon any plausible pretext, could require. This is not the time and place for entering into that inquiry ; but those who wish to pursue it, will find it fully treated in the various publications of the day on the subject, and by the modern historians of India.*

The extraordinary powers of eloquence displayed by Burke and Sheridan in opening the charges are well known,

another his wit, all men what they please, and most upon hearsay, with a kind of uncharitable delight of making the charge as heavy as may be) are commonly stuffed with many odious generals, that the proofs seldom make good ; and then a man is no sooner found less guilty than he is expected, but he is concluded more innocent than he is ; and it is thought but a just reparation for the reproach that he deserved not, to free him from the censure he deserved."

* See also Moore's Life of Sheridan, ch. 11.

and have divided critics, and the world in general, in opinion, as to which of them is entitled to the palm of excellence. The speech of Sheridan in the House of Commons, on the Begum charge, excited the warmest admiration of his illustrious cotemporaries, one of whom, Mr. Pitt, actually moved an adjournment of the House immediately after its delivery, on the ground that, "they were under the wand of an enchanter." His speech on the same subject, delivered at the bar of the Lords, appears to have rivalled its predecessor; and as far as we can judge from the extracts which alone Mr. Moore has given to the world in his delightful "*Life of Sheridan*," richly deserved its fame. But full justice cannot possibly be done to the talents of those extraordinary men, and especially of Burke, without reading the trial throughout, so as fully to perceive the readiness and fertility of those resources which no surprise could disconcert, and no efforts exhaust; and that amazing extent and variety of knowledge which the constant exigencies of the impeachment rendered it necessary to display. I shall present before you specimens of both orators, and leave you to decide to whom the palm is due. The judgment of most of you, will, probably, be similar to the one you would pronounce on Sir Walter Scott's novels, that the *best* is the *last* you read.

The following extract is from Mr. Sheridan's speech:—

"An honourable friend of mine,* who is now, I believe, near me—a gentleman, to whom I never can on any occasion refer without feelings of respect, and, on this subject, without feelings of the most grateful homage; a gentleman, whose abilities upon this occasion, as upon some former ones, happily for the glory of the age in which we live, are not entrusted merely to the perishable eloquence of the day, but will live to be the admiration of that hour when all of us are mute, and most of us forgotten;—that honourable gentleman has told you that Prudence, the first of virtues, never can be used in the cause of vice. If, reluctant and diffident, I might take such a liberty, I should express a doubt whether experience, observation, or history, will warrant us in fully assenting to this observation. It is a noble and a lovely sentiment, my Lords, worthy the mind of him who uttered it, worthy that proud disdain, that generous scorn of the means and instruments of vice, which virtue and genius must ever feel. But I should doubt whether we can read the history of a Philip of Macedon, a Cæsar, or

* Burke.

a Cromwell, without confessing, that there have been evil purposes, baneful to the peace and to the rights of men, conducted—if I may not say with prudence or with wisdom—yet with awful craft, and most successful and commanding subtlety. If, however, I might make a distinction, I should say that it is the proud attempt to mix a *variety* of lordly crimes, that unsettles the prudence of the mind, and breeds this distraction of the brain. *One* master-passion, domineering in the breast, may win the faculties of the understanding to advance its purpose, and to direct to that object every thing that thought or human knowledge can affect; but, to succeed, it must maintain a solitary despotism in the mind;—each rival profligacy must stand aloof, or wait in abject vassalage upon its throne. For the Power that has not forbid the entrance of evil passions into man's mind, has at least forbid their union;—if they meet, they defeat their object, and their conquest or their attempt at it is tumult. Turn to the Virtues—how different the decree! Formed to connect, to blend, to associate, and to co-operate; bearing the same course, with kindred energies and harmonious sympathy, each perfect in its own lovely sphere, each moving in its wider or more contracted orbit, with different but centering powers, guided by the same influence of reason, and endeavouring at the same blessed end—the happiness of the individual, the harmony of the species, and the glory of the Creator. In the Vices, on the other hand, it is the discord that insures the defeat—each clamours to be heard in its own barbarous language; each claims the exclusive cunning of the brain; each thwarts and reproaches the other; and even while their fell rage assails with common hate the peace and virtue of the world, the civil war among their own tumultuous legions defeats the purpose of the foul conspiracy. These are the Furies of the mind, my Lords, that unsettle the understanding; these are the Furies, that destroy the virtue, Prudence,—while the distracted brain and shivered intellect proclaim the tumult that is within, and bear their testimonies, from the mouth of God himself, to the foul condition of the heart.”*

Of this magnificent passage it is not saying too much that it is almost impossible for the human powers to soar higher; but I shall put it to the only test adequate to it, and read a passage from Burke. I select his description of the *Devastation of the Carnatic*:—

“When at length Hyder Ali found that he had to do with men who either would sign no convention, or whom no treaty and no signature could bind, and who were the determined enemies of human intercourse itself, he decreed to make the country possessed by those incorrigible and predestinated criminals a memorable example to mankind. He resolved, in the gloomy recesses of a mind capacious of such things, to leave the whole Carnatic an everlasting monument of vengeance, and to put perpetual desolation as a

* Moore's Life of Sheridan, chap. 11.

barrier between him and those, against whom the faith which holds the moral elements of the world together, was no protection. He became at length so confident of his force, so collected in his might, that he made no secret whatsoever of his dreadful resolution. Having terminated his disputes with every enemy, and every rival, who buried their mutual animosities in their common detestation against the creditors of the nabob of Arcot, he drew from every quarter whatever a savage ferocity could add to his new rudiments in the arts of destruction; and compounding all the materials of fury, havoc, and desolation, into one black cloud, he hung for a while on the declivities of the mountains. Whilst the authors of all these evils were idly and stupidly gazing on this menacing meteor, which blackened all their horizon, it suddenly burst, and poured down the whole of its contents upon the plains of the Carnatic. Then ensued a scene of woe, the like of which no eye had seen, no heart conceived, and which no tongue can adequately tell. All the horrors of war before known or heard of, were mercy to that new havoc. A storm of universal fire blasted every field, consumed every house, destroyed every temple. The miserable inhabitants flying from their flaming villages, in part were slaughtered; others, without regard to sex, to age, to the respect of rank, or sacredness of function, fathers torn from children, husbands from wives, enveloped in a whirlwind of cavalry, and amidst the goading spears of drivers and the trampling of pursuing horses, were swept into captivity in an unknown and hostile land. Those who were able to evade this tempest, fled to the walled cities. But escaping from fire, sword, and exile, they fell into the jaws of famine.

“Of all the calamities which beset and waylay the life of man, this comes the nearest to our heart, and is that wherein the proudest of us all feels himself to be nothing more than he is: but I find myself unable to manage it with decorum; these details are of a species of horror so nauseous and disgusting; they are so degrading to the sufferers and to the hearers; they are so humiliating to human nature itself, that, on better thoughts, I find it more advisable to throw a pall over this hideous object, and to leave it to your general conceptions.”

The mind is overwhelmed—criticism is disarmed—the human faculties can soar no higher!

The next important subject which occupied the gifted pen of Mr. Burke, was one which exercised the most potent spell over his life, and changed the whole course of its current. I refer to that stupendous event of modern days, the *French Revolution*; which not only upset thrones and nobles, not only disorganized all society in France, and, afterwards, through the agency of its then invincible armies, carried dismay to every corner of continental

Europe, but penetrated even here, and produced the most important effects in British politics. The shock of the great earthquake was felt across the channel. The terrific hurricane swept the neighbouring seas, and spent its remaining force in the British Isles. At the outset, indeed, of that awful catastrophe, almost every man of liberal and enlightened views hailed it with satisfaction. Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox concurred in anticipating from it the most beneficial results to France and to Europe. They hoped that the weak despotism of the Bourbons had come to a close; and that the amiable monarch then reigning, free from the personal vices of his predecessors, would become the fountain of a new line of sovereigns, limited by the wise precautions which guard the British monarchy. They saw with gratification the destruction of the feudal privileges of a noblesse possessed of no title to respect but antiquity, and of the obnoxious power which superstition had conferred on an enslaving priesthood. They hailed with joy the advent of a period when France, free from the influence of her ancient feelings, would learn to exchange the vain and guilty ambition of military glory, for the genuine, substantial, and untarnished splendours of peace and commerce. They expected that she would derive political wisdom from her enlightened neighbour, and, taking advantage of the lights of experience, adapt the British Constitution to her renovated existence. Alas! these hopes were delusive; but I confess I cannot see how they could be otherwise. *A people* is not to be made free, or fit for freedom, in a few months or years. Nations cannot, by the mere possession of the power, immediately become able to carry on a government pure and intelligent; for they, like individuals, must go through a process of political education and training before they can act with any advantageous effect. The majority of the French people had been too long treated as slaves or children to be qualified to rule themselves. Accustomed for centuries to the double rein of the church and the crown, when that restraint was suddenly and violently withdrawn, no curb was left to check their licentiousness and fury. Superstition had been disarmed of its terrors, the prestige

of the throne of Louis XIV. was gone, and the infuriated slaves arose in the dreadful excitement of unbridled passions, the scourge and lesson of the world. As the Revolution advanced, its partizans decreased. Men were split into schisms of opinion on its character and bearings, and viewed it through the medium of their peculiar feelings. Whatever may be the form of government adopted in any state, those principles of human nature, I suspect, will yet long, if not ever, prevail, which give some men a strong bias against aristocratic, and others as strong a bias against democratic power. They in whose breasts the love of liberty beat with more warmth than prudence, and in whom that noble sentiment was untempered by the practical wisdom resulting from a philosophic study of history and a wide experience of mankind, which checks the enthusiasts of philanthropy by the knowledge of the obstacles which are presented to their endeavours by human passions and interests, viewed the early progress of the Revolution with a joyful confidence of success, which an attentive reflection on the circumstances would have much abated. On the contrary, they with whom the aristocratic principle naturally predominated, and who feared the exercise of *popular* power as destructive of the peace and order of society, were struck with terror at the out-burst of the Revolution, but soon recovered sufficient courage to predict, with certainty, the failure of the popular hopes, which finally ensued. The ferment into which the nation at large was thrown, agitated, of course, the great political parties of the State. Mr. Burke withdrew from the side of his friend Mr. Fox, with whom he had so long struggled in opposition, and led after him a small but powerful minority of the Whig party. The scene which occurred in the House of Commons on the first public exposure of their difference is described to have been extremely interesting. Mr. Fox actually shed tears, and Mr. Burke was deeply affected. He said he was "aware
 " of the sacrifice which he must make, and he was prepared
 " to make it. He and his friends were from that moment
 " separated for ever." Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan, and the great body of the Whig party were of opinion, that the

thunder-storm which had broken over France was necessary to clear the political atmosphere. No men felt greater or more genuine disgust at the horrors which were produced by it. They were shocked at the dreadful termination of the reign of the amiable but weak, misguided, and unfortunate monarch, on a scaffold of his capital ; and, as to the *reign of terror*, the only answer which they, or any men deserving of the name, could give to any person who pretended to disbelieve their indignation at it, was, to treat the imputation as a personal insult. But while no one could possibly feel greater horror at such excesses than those two distinguished statesmen, and the respectable Whig party whom they led, yet, they did not, therefore, join in the execration so commonly and lavishly bestowed on the French people. They thought that, although great men negative the rule, and negative it because they are great, yet, that large masses of men are deeply influenced, and almost moulded by the circumstances which surround them, and the habits and education which they have derived from the institutions of the society in which they live. They were of opinion, that when such masses are kept in brutal ignorance, their follies and ferocities are not to be placed so much to their own account, as of the persons by whom that brutal ignorance is fostered. They thought that gigantic abuses were to be got rid of, the obnoxious hereditary privileges of certain classes of society, which could not be withdrawn without a desperate struggle. They thought it extremely unfair to tax the people with violence, and yet not be angry at the grasping selfishness of those classes who would relax nothing but at the sword's point. And, in fine, they felt then, what some of the philosophic historians of the Revolution have endeavoured to establish since, that it had become *necessary* in the course of events, and that the horrors by which it was accompanied were *unavoidable* evils produced by the nature of things.

Mr. Burke, on the other hand, differed widely from these views. He disapproved of the Revolution from the beginning, and predicted at a very early stage that it would become the mother of every evil. He was shocked at the

destruction of the church, the monarchy, and the aristocracy ; and the trampling of every thing sacred, under what he termed “ the hoofs of the swinish multitude.” His disgust and indignation at the unheard of barbarities and lawless domination of the French canaille were so great, and exercised such a powerful, and, at last, morbid influence over his mind, that he would make no allowance for any supposed provocations, nor enter into any impartial inquiry into the *causes* which might have produced such dreadful effects.* His enemies, indeed, have accused him of inconsistency and dishonesty in the desertion of his party—for pitying the plumage, but forgetting the dying bird of the French nation ; and they appeal, with a confident air of triumph to the pension of 2,500*l.* per annum which he shortly afterwards received from the government. Into that subject I enter not. I pronounce no opinion. We are here considering Edmund Burke in his *literary* character, in which he stands among the first rank of men ; and I may therefore describe the “ Reflections on the French Revolution,” as a most exquisite production of Literature. This work excited the greatest sensation at the period of its publication, not only among the friends, but the foes of the principles which it so powerfully supported. Monarchs sent him flattering presents for his powerful advocacy of

* In former times he thought differently of Revolutions. In his “ *Thoughts on the Discontents*,” he says, “ I am not one of those who think that the people are never in the wrong. They have been so, frequently and outrageously, both in other countries and in this. *But I do say, that in all disputes between them and their rulers, the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people.* Experience may perhaps justify me in going farther. When popular discontents have been very prevalent, it may be well affirmed and supported, that there has been generally some thing found amiss in the constitution, or in the conduct of government. *The people have no interest in disorder.* When they do wrong it is their error, and not their crime. But with the governing part of the state, it is far otherwise. They certainly may act ill by design, as well as by mistake. *Les Révolutions qui arrivent dans les grands états ne sont point un effet du hazard ni du caprice des peuples. Pour la populace, ce n'est jamais par envie d'attaquer qu'elle se soulève, mais par impatience de souffrir.* These are the words of a great man, [Sully] of a minister of state, and a zealous asserter of monarchy.”

what he called the “cause of Sovereigns;” and almost every writer, good, bad, and indifferent, on the opposite side, took the field and broke a lance against him. Two remarkable productions have survived to our own day, though with a much inferior fame to the immortal work which brought them forth; the “*Vindicæ Gallicæ*” of Sir James Mackintosh, and the powerful “*Rights of Man*,” by Thomas Paine. The former composition bears every stamp of the character of its excellent author—elegant, learned, and acute; and so much pleased even Burke himself, that he invited Sir James to his house at Beaconsfield, as a token of his esteem. The latter work would probably have met with a much better reception from the world, notwithstanding the great unpopularity of many of its suggestions, but for the well-known disreputable personal character of its author, and the obnoxious nature of some of his other works on the sacred subject of religion.

I shall now proceed to read to you Burke’s elegant description of the Queen of France, which is, perhaps, familiar to many of you; but who can ever tire of such a picture? It is perfect as a piece of composition. He who can read it without emotion is made of very different feelings to me; and if there be any whose strong disapprobation of the political tenets conveyed by the work in which such literary beauties abound blinds him to them, I can only say, that however I may commend his zeal, I cannot commend his taste.

“It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in,—glittering like the morning-star, full of life, of splendor, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream that, when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her

with insult.—But the age of chivalry is gone.—That of sophisters, œconomists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprize is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness."

The great praise which I have bestowed on this passage demands of me an explanation, lest I should be misunderstood to adopt what appear to me the dangerous untruths conveyed by it. "The age of chivalry," Mr. Burke deeply regrets, "is gone;"—but, notwithstanding, that a great historian, Gibbon, said "he adored Mr. Burke for his chivalry," I think an attentive and impartial examination of that era of society will justify the remark of Lord Byron, in his preface to *Childe Harold*, that such a regret was misplaced; for you will find from history that the characteristics of those times were not merely the harmless or generous follies of some individual knights, which the inimitable pen of Cervantes has handed down to the perpetual ridicule of posterity, but a series of cruelty and misery on the most extensive scale;—society divided into the two classes of the haughty noble and cunning priest, and of the degraded and plundered serf (to which latter class, let it be remembered, almost all of us now present would have been unhappy enough to belong); and, to describe in two words the sum of human wretchedness, harassed by "perpetual war." Well said Napoleon, in contempt—when describing the policy of Francis I., who is styled the "flower of chivalry,"—"The folly of the time! The extent of feudal intellect! Francis I. was, after all, but a hero for tilts and tournaments, and a gallant for the drawing-rooms,—one of those pigmy great men!" [*Las Casas*, v. 3.] And even in those vivid pictures of this era of society, which the exquisite pencil of Sir Walter has presented in his charming novels, (certainly with no wish to depreciate it,) there is

quite enough, I confess, to make me thankful that I did not live at the time of the Front de Bœufs and the Templars. Instead, therefore, of weakly regretting, with Mr. Burke, that the "age of chivalry" and of such men "is gone,"—let *us rejoice* that the age of wide-spread intelligence is come!

And as to the concluding sentiment of that magnificent burst of eloquence, viz. that "vice loses half its evil by losing all its grossness;" I do not think a logical moralist would find much difficulty in convincing you that vice has its evils doubled by losing its grossness, and that its allurements are never so great and enticing as when they are covered by the veil of refinement. Dr. Johnson, in an early number of the "Rambler," [No. 4,] tells us that, "Vice, as vice is necessary to be shewn, should always *disgust us*; nor should the graces of gaiety or the dignity of courage be so united with it as to reconcile it to the mind. Wherever it appears, it should raise hatred by the malignity of its practice, and contempt by the meanness of its stratagems." And he adds, "There have been men, indeed, splendidly wicked, whose endowments threw a brightness over their crimes, and whom scarce any villainy made perfectly detestable, because they never could be wholly divested of their excellencies; but such have been *in all ages the greatest corruptors of the world*, and their resemblance ought no more to be preserved than the art of murdering without pain." And Mr. Burke has answered himself on this point, when delivering his opinion on the "Beggar's Opera," a work to which we are told [*Bissett's Life*,] he objected, because "it represented vice in agreeable colours."

The Revolution continued to occupy Burke's mind and pen to an almost morbid extent till his death, and was the occasion of one of his finest works, written not long before that event, but with all the fire and imagination of youth—I refer to the "*Thoughts on a Regicide Peace*," from which nothing but the want of time prevents my reading some extracts to you. This is an apology to which I have resorted before, and I cannot resist the opportunity of enforcing upon you the importance of following up the inquiry

which I have commenced, and reading more at leisure and more at length those matchless compositions of which I have been only able to give you a general and inadequate idea. At the commencement of this Lecture I took the liberty to express my strong feeling of the importance and appropriateness for public lectures of such subjects as the present; but all that the most skilful and industrious Lecturer can do is to rouse your attention, engage your interest, and direct your path; and he will be perfectly successful, and will have achieved all that he can rationally propose as the end of his endeavours, or will be, indeed, in his power to effect, if he can induce a considerable portion of his audience to follow up the inquiry he has instituted, and make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the works to which he directs their attention.

The remaining subject which occupied Burke's pen, was his vindication of *his pension*. The Duke of Bedford and Lord Lauderdale had attacked the ministers in the House of Lords for conferring this pension, and accused Burke of inconsistency in accepting it, which produced one of the most masterly efforts of human composition which the whole world of literature can show. I refer to the justly celebrated "*Letter to a Noble Lord*."

The following extract contains no political allusion. It is a most touching lamentation for the loss of his only son :

"Had it pleased God to continue to me the hopes of succession, I should have been according to my mediocrity, and the mediocrity of the age I live in, a sort of founder of a family; I should have left a son, who, in all the points in which personal merit can be viewed, in science, in erudition, in genius, in taste, in honour, in generosity, in humanity, in every liberal sentiment, and every liberal accomplishment, would not have shewn himself inferior to the Duke of Bedford, or to any of those whom he traces in his line. His grace very soon would have wanted all plausibility in his attack upon that provision which belonged more to mine than to me. HE would soon have supplied every deficiency, and symmetrized every disproportion. It would not have been for that successor to resort to any stagnant wasting reservoir of merit in me, or in any ancestry. He had in himself a salient, living spring, of generous and manly action. Every day he lived he would have re-purchased the bounty of the crown, and ten times more, if ten times more he had received. He was made a public

creature; and had no enjoyment whatever, but in the performance of some duty. At this exigent moment, the loss of a finished man is not easily supplied.

“ But a disposer whose power we are little able to resist, and whose wisdom it behoves us not at all to dispute; has ordained it in another manner, and (whatever my querulous weakness might suggest) a far better. The storm has gone over me; and I lie like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me. I am stripped of all my honours; I am torn up by the roots, and lie prostrate on the earth! There, and prostrate there, I most unfeignedly recognize the divine justice, and in some degree submit to it. But whilst I humble myself before God, I do not know that it is forbidden to repel the attacks of unjust and inconsiderate men. The patience of Job is proverbial. After some of the convulsive struggles of our irritable nature, he submitted himself, and repented in dust and ashes. But even so, I do not find him blamed for reprehending, and with considerable degree of verbal asperity, those ill-natured neighbours of his, who visited his dunghill, to read moral, political, and æconomical lectures on his misery. I am alone. I have none to meet my enemies in the gate. I live in an inverted order. They who ought to have succeeded me, have gone before me. They who should have been to me as posterity, are in the place of ancestors. I owe to the dearest relation (which ever must subsist in memory) that act of piety, which he would have performed to me; I owe it to him to shew that he was not descended, as the Duke of Bedford would have it, from an unworthy parent.”

I have now drawn your attention, though in the summary manner alone permitted to me, to the most celebrated writings and the most important public events in the life of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke,—a man who was endowed with marvellous talents, which were neither dissipated nor buried in a napkin by their gifted possessor, but were so employed as to make him a man of as marvellous knowledge and attainments. Nor is it only in the glare of public life, nor only for his immortal compositions that Mr. Burke is to be studied and admired. The quiet undercurrent of his existence equally deserves our attentive approbation, and honourably distinguishes him from his great cotemporaries. Mr. Pitt's private life was correct, but unenviable—unenlivened and untried by those delightful responsibilities which afford the genuine sphere for the duties and happiness of man. It is chiefly in the cultivation and exercise of the *affections*, that our Omnipotent Father has destined us to find our happiness. Mr. Fox, indeed,

was distinguished by the qualities which make men beloved in society, and which were so admirably pourtrayed by his friend in the bewitching but dangerous character of Charles Surface, in the exquisite comedy of the "School for Scandal." The wonderful author of that elegant piece of satire, which was written at the age of six-and-twenty, was gifted to a degree hardly ever equalled by the sons of men with the enchanting faculty of *wit*. But, both those eminent men were unfortunately notorious for their disregard of some of those important rules of conduct on the observance of which common sense dictates that society must materially depend. He who cheats the man that confides in him, in a witty manner, may make us laugh at his jests, and half disarm our anger (for wit and good humour are qualities which cover a multitude of sins); but reflection soon insures him our contempt and indignation. Nor can nights wasted in gambling and drinking, with their sad consequences of neglected households and accumulated debts, be redeemed by any professions, or even great exertions, on behalf of public virtue; for although we may admit the suspicion which the world entertains to be unjust, viz. that men who habitually disregard the useful virtues, on which society is based, are hypocritical or impudent pretenders to the great and splendid ones by which it is elevated and adorned; yet, we must feel, I think, that the continued discharge of the daily duties of life by the great portion of mankind is of more importance to their well-being and happiness, than those occasional efforts even of great genius and great virtues which sometimes are certainly vital to the existence of the most valuable privileges of life, and are always ennobling and delightful to contemplate. The perfection of human character, indeed, and the true path to the greatest sum of happiness attainable by man here, consists in the harmonious exercise of *all* the faculties of our nature, in the discharge and union of private and public virtue. Mr. Burke brought into the field of public contest the advantage of his unexceptionable private life. He was an excellent father and husband in the genuine sense of those words, in his earnest and sympathizing companionship with the wife of

his bosom, and an anxious and constant superintendence over the education of his son. All the disquietudes of public life “vanished,” he said, “when he entered his home.” You have observed the strength with which the parental feeling beat in his breast, in the exquisitely touching description which I read to you of the loss he sustained in the death of his only son; and that loss certainly hastened, if it did not actually cause, his own decease. He was a staunch and delightful *friend*; one from whose companionship equal improvement and pleasure were derived. Dr. Johnson has passed many encomiums on his powers, one of them, probably familiar to you, that, “if any person of sense had stood up in a gateway to avoid a shower of rain at the same time as Mr. Burke, he would have discovered him to be an extraordinary man.” And Mr. Fox bore equal testimony to the unlimited stores of his mind, and the facility with which they were poured forth to all around. He declared, in the House of Commons, that, “he had learned more from Mr. Burke than from all other sources of reading and experience put together;” and though their quarrel was unfortunately very severe, yet, Mr. Fox watched his declining powers with the most anxious interest, and after his death moved a resolution in the House of Commons that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey. How various and profound were his talents and knowledge,—how elegant and refined his acquirements! Let us imagine him indulging his fine natural taste in the pursuit of kindred studies with his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, the Literary Artist, when their varied knowledge in different departments reflected mutual light, and conveyed mutual instruction.

“Smit with the love of Sister Arts they came,

“And met congenial, mingling flame with flame;

“Like friendly colours, see them both unite,

“And each from each contract new strength and light.”*

Let us imagine the author of the “Sublime and Beautiful” assisting his friend in the composition of those admirable and delightful “Discourses on Painting,” which are so

* Pope’s Epistle to Jervas. (See Sir Joshua Reynolds’ “Discourses.”)

justly celebrated for their literary and professional merits. Let us imagine the statesman, after the delivery of one of those magnificent orations, which must be as imperishable as the language which they have adorned, unbending his mighty soul, and seeking the relaxation natural to such spirits, not in a suspension of the intellectual powers, but merely in a change of their object, and rendering his home a seat of the muses, the sacred retreat of learning and of taste! The Memoirs of every remarkable person of either sex, in that æra, from Boswell's Life of Johnson to the recent biographies of Madame D'Arblay and Mrs. H. More, make incidental mention of Edmund Burke, and always in terms of the highest eulogy, for the splendour and variety of his talents, and the kindness and sociality of his temper.

But it was not only when enjoying "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" with his brother wits, at the table of Sir Joshua, or at the Literary Club, nor in the wide circle of his friends and acquaintance, that this intellectual Crichton is the subject of our admiration. Observe his conduct to his superiors and inferiors in station. When Secretary to W. G. Hamilton, commonly called "single speech Hamilton," that gentleman was kind enough to procure Mr. Burke an advantageous position; but the selfish author of "Parliamentary Logic" had no idea of anything being given "*without consideration*." Accordingly, he was astonished that Mr. Burke thought fit still to pursue an independent line of conduct, and not sell himself body and soul to his *generous* patron. Mr. Burke immediately threw up the appointments so *liberally* bestowed upon him, refusing with indignation to submit to such an imposition; and he afterwards [*Letter to Flood*] says, that his motive in not becoming reconciled to Mr. Hamilton was, that "all his proposals for conciliation were vitiated by the *taint of that servitude* with which they were mixed." Now, let us turn to the other side of the picture, and there we see the beneficent protector of the meritorious and the wretched. The impetuous and self-willed Barry, the gentle and unfriended Crabbe, owed almost every thing to Mr. Burke. Nor was it only to painters and to poets that his hand was extended to relieve. His bio-

grapher, Mr. Prior, in the same spirit of reverential admiration for his hero with which Boswell writes of Johnson, and Mr. Montague of Lord Bacon, has collected many instances of his generosity; and to such an undue extent, indeed, did he carry his propensity of giving, that he was sometimes actually foolishly embarrassed in his own circumstances from his indulgence of that fine foible. In all the private relations of life, then, we see the conduct of this great man harmonious and consistent—anxiously discharging every private duty of husband, father, friend, and fellow creature, till his great heart had ceased to beat!

The reputation of Edmund Burke *in literature* is now so high and firmly established, that no duty is imposed on the Lecturer of vindicating it; but his task is confined to the critical explanation of the sources whence it is derived. Adequately, indeed, to discharge that task, and to render full justice to his various talents and acquirements, would demand that something of his own power should animate, and some portion, at least, of his mantle should descend upon the shoulders of his critic. I must content myself, according to the measure of my abilities, and the limited time allotted to me, with a very general and rapid summary. The exquisite harmony of the sentences, the aptness and force of the language, and the general beauty of the composition, must have been recognised by all in the extracts which, throughout the Lecture, I have brought to your attention. But the real source of interest, the pervading charm and the distinguishing excellence of this great author are to be found in the richness and universality of his *illustrations*, which, brought from every field of science and of art, dazzle us throughout the composition in ever-flashing corruscations. “The commonest subjects,” as Lord Erskine well said, “swell into eloquence at the touch of his sublime genius.” This distinguishing attribute of his style stamps the character of his mind. It denotes him the possessor of knowledge as various as profound, and of the talent enjoyed to a degree equally rare and exquisite, of not only communicating that knowledge to others, but of making it the vehicle of conveying other truths apparently unconnected, but of deep im-

portance, and which are thereby impressed upon the mind of the reader with a strength which such a captivating mode of enforcing them could alone impart. And this predominant characteristic seems to me to explain in some degree the apparent inconsistency which Mr. Macaulay has remarked in his splendid article on *Lord Bacon*, in a recent No. of the *Edinburgh Review* [July, 1837],—viz., that Burke's imagination appears to have grown warmer as he grew older. That elegant critic says that Burke, in the heat of his youth, wrote of the master-pieces of sculpture and painting, and of the necks and faces of beautiful women, in the style of a parliamentary report; and, in his age, discussed treaties and tariffs with all the fire of the most glowing rhetoric. The statement of this peculiarity is true to a certain extent, but is, I think, much exaggerated. I do not agree that the *Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful*, to which the critic here refers, is characterized by dryness or dullness, although I admit the *substantial* truth of the observation, that it is inferior in every merit of composition, and even in the display of wit and fancy, to the latest, and, indeed, all the subsequent works of the author, some of which were written in his old age, and almost immediately previous to his death. And, although this peculiarity be an apparent exception to the laws which regulate the mental constitution of the majority of mankind, I do not think it so great an exception as the criticism supposes, in the case of men distinguished for the gift of imagination. For if we view the matter attentively, we shall be probably surprised to see that several of the great writers of that kind are open to something of the same remark. Look at Dryden, who wrote his "Fables" and "Alexander's Feast," at the age of 70. The *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, too, were the last works of a life of literature. It will be difficult, perhaps, to account for this in a manner perfectly satisfactory to most people, but, for myself, I confess the difficulty in Burke's case is considerably solved by the characteristic to which I have not long ago referred; for, as the field of his knowledge became enlarged, the resources of his genius are multiplied; and constant practice and continued indul-

gence in that rich style of composition had so facilitated and habituated it to him, as to render it at last ornate even to a fault. And I am not acquainted with any other writer endowed with that faculty to such an extent as it was possessed by Burke. Between him and Cicero, indeed, there is a remarkable general resemblance, both as regards their literary characteristics and powers and their public proceedings. I recommend the literary student to institute a comparison between them, and after a careful study of both writers, he will find himself probably very dissatisfied with his own efforts, when tested by the standard of their inimitable compositions, but wonderfully the better for the labour which he has bestowed. Every youthful artist who knows his duty to himself, runs to Rome, that, by the habitual contemplation of the sublime productions of Michael Angelo and of Raphael, he may not vainly hope to rival those matchless masters of the chisel and the pencil, but catch the fire of their genius and endeavour to adopt their style. The glories of the Vatican, which check his presumption, animate his zeal. The truth is, to speak it reverently, that it is the glorious prerogative of all really great men, that "virtue goes out of them." A Demosthenes and a Luther transfer their own enthusiasm to the gathered multitudes around them, who not only *appear*, but for the moment *are*, possessed of some portion of the fire which burns in *their* ardent souls. And they who accustom themselves to the perusal of the standard works of literature, although they may certainly labour under the disadvantage of fastidiousness, arising from correct taste, will find themselves able to use their own pens with much greater facility and force. This habit will strengthen that most useful sentiment, the *admiration of greatness*, the effective corrector of two vices of a different but equally mischievous nature—inordinate vanity, and a disbelief of the noble capabilities and exalted tendencies and destiny of Human Nature.

Edmund Burke was the first man, at least in modern days, who threw a grace and charm over political disquisitions, and was also the first to give an entirely new character to our senatorial eloquence. He was the foremost

in that band of extraordinary men, by whom the House of Commons was made the arena of intellectual contests, "above all Greek, above all Roman fame," and which were as unexpected as they were unprecedented. For *Dr. Blair*, the amiable and elegant Professor of *Belles Lettres*, at the University of Edinburgh, and who may be presumed to have uttered the sentiments of the literary world, delivered his Lectures a few years before Mr. Burke pronounced his famous speeches on the American question. In his twenty-sixth Lecture, on "Modern Eloquence," the Doctor concurs in the feeling of surprise which Mr. Hume had shortly before expressed in his beautiful Essay on "Eloquence," [*See his Essays*] at the inferiority of Great Britain in that respect, not only to the Greeks and Romans, but also to the Continent; and he says, "We have both taste and erudition in a high degree. We have historians and poets of the greatest name; *but of orators or public speakers how little have we to boast? And where are the monuments of their genius to be found?*"

This reproach was delivered about the year 1760, when only some of the grand but irregular bursts of Chatham had been heard; but in ten years afterwards it was removed by Edmund Burke, at once and for ever. The immortal orations which he then pronounced, and the series of which they were the commencement, will stand comparison with any efforts of eloquence ancient or modern, of which the world can boast, and will descend to posterity in company with the Phillippics of Demosthenes and Cicero!

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